

ARE THERE ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN SERBIA'S HUMAN RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

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Abstract

Today, we frequently discuss the significance of accomplishing the objectives of sustainable development, but first, we must assess the conditions necessary to address these issues, particularly in developing countries. Additionally, a growing number of experts are discussing the idea that certain objectives should be accomplished in more or less vulnerable areas rather than being monitored and compared across countries. Every human being's development begins with education. How do we talk about the continuing development of society if there is a sizable portion of the population that is illiterate, uneducated, and unemployed, and at the same time there is discrimination because that demographic is primarily female? We used the data on incomplete primary school, illiterate population, computer literate population, employed and economically inactive populations, as well as homemakers by gender at the area level (25 units). These are a few of the indicators that reveal the potential of human resources, which are the essential building blocks for the growth of society and the economy. Since the last Census was conducted last year, but the data has not yet been published, our analysis is based on the last official Census from 2011. Based on the indicators, areas that are more threatened and those with a wider gender disparity than in other areas have been singled out. Given that the observed indicators are tied to the economic and educational frameworks, it is advised that data from other sectors be included in future studies to provide a more complete picture of what needs to be focused on .

Keywords: education, gender equality, economic structure, literate, computer literate, unemployed, Serbia

1.Introduction

Global plans must be made to conserve the earth due to the many significant issues of contemporary society and capitalism. The 17 goals of sustainable development (SD) and the targets within them represent the route toward which 193 UN member states have pledged to offer solutions to many issues. Many goals won't be accomplished by 2030 as intended, thus urgent local and national action is required, along with continual monitoring of global developments and plan amendment. Almost all studies on SD begin with the definition from the Brundtland report from 1987, which stated that "development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987:43). Following this concept, analyzing SD became considerably more difficult, requiring a larger database as well as more questions and participants in the process of delivering answers. The reason why this definition is often quoted is, on the one hand, that it was the beginning of theoretical work, and on the other hand, it is concise, clear, and sends the essential message of SD. In the economic, social, and environmental spheres, the SDGs are a global framework that includes numerous potentially conflicting policy goals, but also many of them are mutually complementary (Breuer et al., 2019; Pradhan, 2019). It will ultimately depend critically on whether trade-offs across the entire spectrum of the SDGs can be reduced and synergies can be utilized whether the global community is able to achieve Agenda 2030. Kroll et al. (2019) have discovered indications of a

pervasive, concerning incapacity to overcome trade-offs as well as a decline in this area for several SDGs. The main research of this paper is connected with SDG 5 (Gender equality) and they found out that this goal has emerged only recently with SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 16 (Peace and justice, strong institutions).

Making education accessible to everyone, including those with all levels of education, is one of the goals because it is the foundation of how societies evolve. Greater equality can be fostered by education, which should be both of good quality and equitable (Walker et al., 2019). In order to increase women's potential and freedom of choice and to promote social and individual change in interconnected socio-economic, political, and psychological realms that support women's freedom, gender imbalances must be addressed (O'Neil et al., 2014; Taylor and Perezniето, 2014). Being denied the fundamental legal rights to engage in economic activity, being prohibited from working outside the home, lacking the necessary education and skills and many other difficulties make women neglected in the nation's main growth process since it makes them dependent on their male counterparts in many parts of the world (Butt et al., 2010). If we include both paid and unpaid jobs, women spend much more time overall, both during the week and on the weekends. However, they spend a little less time than men doing paid work. (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia [SORS], 2017). When it comes to education, job, and home decision-making, women frequently possess less power than men (Goldin and Rouse, 2000; Bertocchi et al., 2014). The population of Europe is aging quickly and according to some experts, increasing the proportion of women in the labor force would increase the workforce by 6% or even 15% if the gender wage gap were closed (Christiansen et al., 2016). The gender differences in economic activities and primary education are highlighted in this paper. The question is, how can be talked about development if we don't have educated people who will support it, and the situation is even more difficult for women? The paper examines how gender difference adds to the vulnerability of developing regions.

The idea of the paper is to analyze gender disparity in the economic structure in addition to the educational structure. In particular, analysis and comparisons of the employed and economically inactive populations were made. As a significant percentage of women are able to work but do unpaid jobs and are economically dependent, we also selected homemakers from the economically inactive population. According to International Labour Organization (2017), women spend about 2.5 times as much time as men doing unpaid care and household chores. An additional concern is the fact that if we take only into account the developing world and break it down by gender, 92% of all female workers in these nations work in the informal sector, compared to 87% of male workers (Bonnet et al., 2019). By enacting the Law on Gender Equality (2009), Serbia has brought the right to protection against discrimination in the labor market into compliance with EU law (Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2006). After that, in 2021 the Act of Gender Equality was adopted (2021). Men and women had a 16% gap in activity, compared to a 14% gap in employment, but also compared to men, women have fewer opportunities to escape unemployment and inactivity (Blunch and Sulla, 2014; Ognjenović, 2018).

In particular, prior research has demonstrated that we may distinguish the four categories based on the level of socioeconomic development (Matović and Lović Obradović, 2022). Population without primary education, economically inactive population, and Gross Value Added per capita have been chosen as the three development metrics, by areas. One could consider the current study to be an extension or refinement of the earlier one. This time, a gender analysis was conducted to demonstrate how difficult it is for developing countries' citizens, particularly women, to advance, escape unemployment, achieve independence, and achieve well-being.

2. Methodology

The data in the paper were taken from the SORS, from the Census 2011 database. The results of Serbia's most recent Census, which was performed in 2022, are not yet available. The aim was to analyze the economic activity of the population and educational structure, with a highlight on women, to emphasize if there is a significant difference between genders. The economic structure differs two groups – economically active and economically inactive (SORS, 2013a). For the purpose of this study, we selected an economically active population who perform occupation, or shorter employed people. There is also the unemployed population in the category of economically active. Another category that was used as an indicator is economically inactive and they are not seeking for the job. Children less than 15 years, pensioners, persons with income from property, pupils/students (aged 15 and more), homemakers, and others fall under this category. The idea was to stress the difference in the share of the population with job and the population who are not economically active. Also, the category of homemakers was analyzed to represent the percentage of women that work unpaid jobs.

Education is the merit good. It is base for development, self-work, and independence, so the educational structure was explored to represent if there is the same starting point for genders development. For this purpose three indicators were selected – population without primary education, illiterate people, and computer literate population. The population without primary education is the sum of the population without educational attainment and the population with incomplete primary education. Everyone who attends school is deemed literate, as are those who have finished at least three grades of elementary school or who have not had an education but claim to be able to read and write. Computer literacy includes the capacity to send and receive email, make tables, use the Internet, and execute text processing (SORS, 2013b). The educational landscape by gender was also presented using data from the 2011 Census. All data were presented by areas, and there are 25 of them in Serbia.

3. Results

The population without primary school is the sum of two categories – the population without educational attainment and the population with incomplete primary education. Considering a sizable portion of the senior population completed the once-existent four-year primary school, the share of the second category is substantially greater. If we consider the male population, there is 0.5% in Beogradska area and approximately 2% in Braničevska, Jablanička, Pčinjska, and Toplička areas without educational attainment. Incomplete primary education varies from 2% in the Belgrade area to 15% in Kolubarska and Zaječarska areas and even 16% in Braničevska area. Collectively (population without educational attainment plus population with incomplete primary education), Beogradska area has the lowest proportion of residents who have not finished primary school (3%), and also 11 out of 25 areas belong to the group up to 10%. Also, it could be differ the group 11–14% where eight areas belong and there are six areas with 15 to 18% (Kolubarska, Pomoravska, Borska, Braničevska, Zaječarska, and Jablanička areas).

Different percentage limits were imposed because women make up a significantly higher proportion of those who did not complete primary school. So for example there is only one area that has up to 10% (Beogradska) and one with up to 14% (Južnobačka) population with this indicator. Also, there are just two areas (Severnobačka and Šumadijska) that would be in the category of 15–18%. Since there is a pronounced disparity between the genders in this situation, it was necessary to divide the female population differently to highlight the severity of the discrepancy. There are just two areas in the category up to 14%, and eight areas have a value from 17 to 19%. Six areas have 20–24% of the female population without primary school, while the other nine areas are in the 25 to

30% category. Braničevska and Zaječarska areas stand out in particular with 30% of women without primary education.

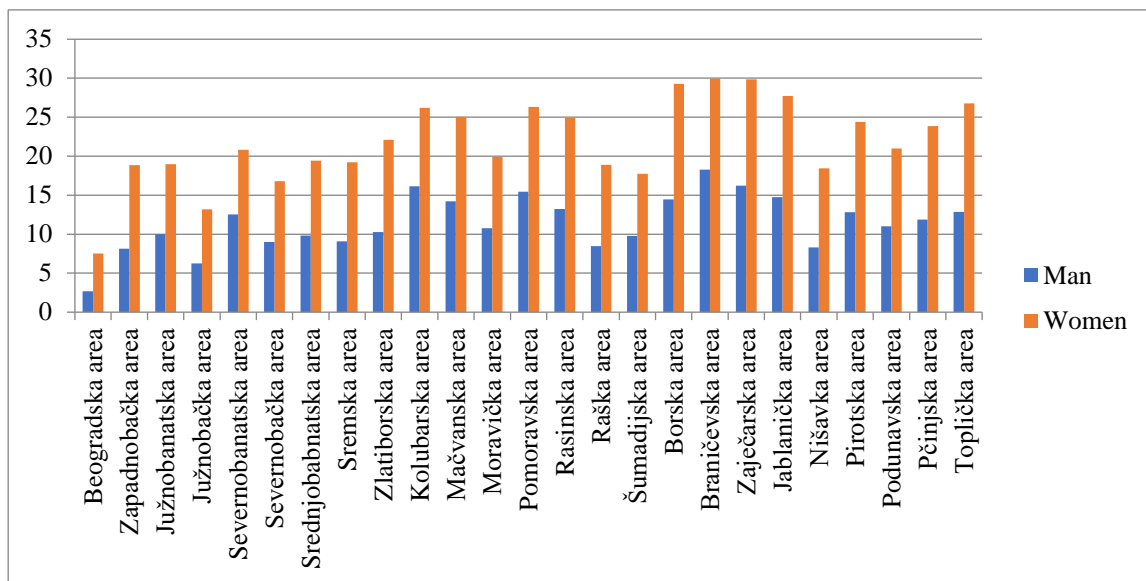


Figure 1. Share of the population without primary school (%), by gender and areas

With the prior examination of primary education, the illiterate population more obviously demonstrates the gap between the genders. Namely, the male population has a share from 0.4 to 1.7. It can be concluded that in most areas, around 1% of men are illiterate. There is a slightly higher share in Pčinjska and Jablanička areas (1.4%), as well as in Braničevska area (1.7%). For women, these numbers differ significantly and range from 1 to 7.3%. If we compare with the marginal values of the percentage of men, two areas (Beogradska and Severnobačka) have 1% illiterate women, and two more have 1.4% (Severnobačarska) and 1.7% (Južnobačka). The female population has eight out of 25 areas with 1–2% illiterate, five areas with 3% illiterate, six areas with 4% illiterate, and six areas with 5–7% illiterate. Here, the most vulnerable are Jablanička and Toplička areas with 7%.

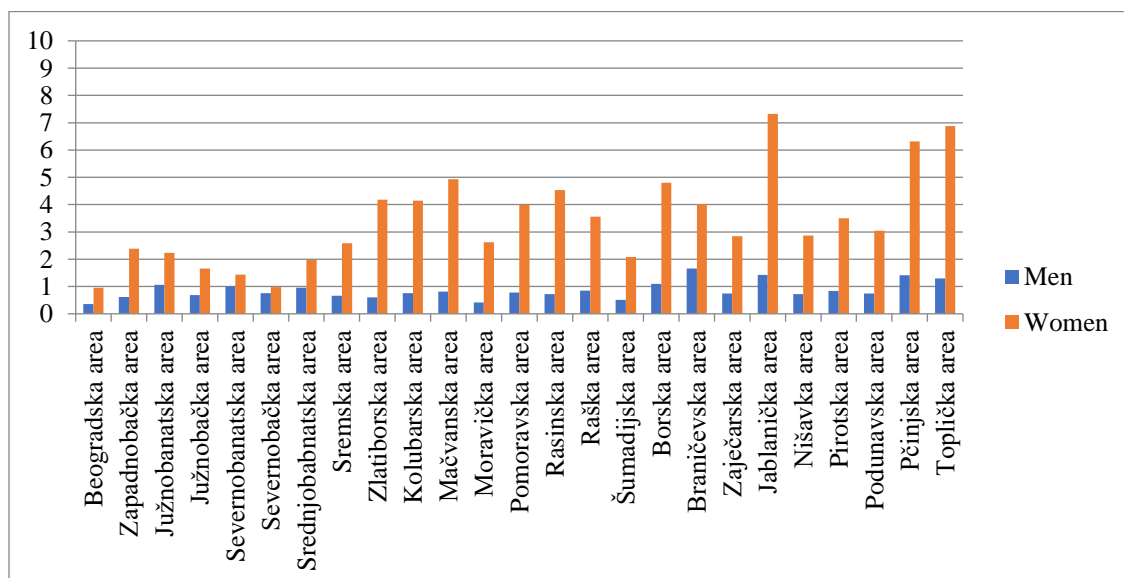


Figure 2. Share of the illiterate population (%), by gender and areas

If the age structure were not also observed, the analysis of the illiterate population would be incomplete. In other words, it is not insignificant that a significant percentage of the population who lacks literacy is past the working age. We observed a percentage of the illiterate population aged 50 and beyond in the total illiterate population because they are now pensioners given that 12-year-old results were evaluated. This age group, for men, is one-third in Beogradska and Severnobačka area, but in other areas is 42–73%. On the other hand, Severnobačka area has the lowest percentage of women in this age group who lack literacy, accounting for about two-thirds of the overall population of illiterate women, while in other areas a percentage is 71–96%. Gender does not significantly affect computer literacy. In the male portion of the population, this category's proportion runs from 25 to 50%, while it is significantly lower for women, at 21 to 46%.

The economic structure of the population has been shown through three indicators – the population who perform occupation (employed), an economically inactive population, and homemakers. The first two indicators are shown in fig. no. 3, by gender. The differences in the blue and green columns show how many more women than men are employed, while the differences between the red and purple columns show how many economically inactive women there are than men. Also, we can compare the green columns with the purple ones, that is, how many women are employed concerning the percentage of economically inactive, and to the latter one could also add the percentage of economically active who are unemployed. The share of unemployed men is 30–50% of the total population aged above 15, and the share of employed women is 18–32%. The worst situation is in Toplička (18%) and Raška (19%) areas. The economically inactive male population is 49–58% by areas, while that share in the female population is 61–72%.

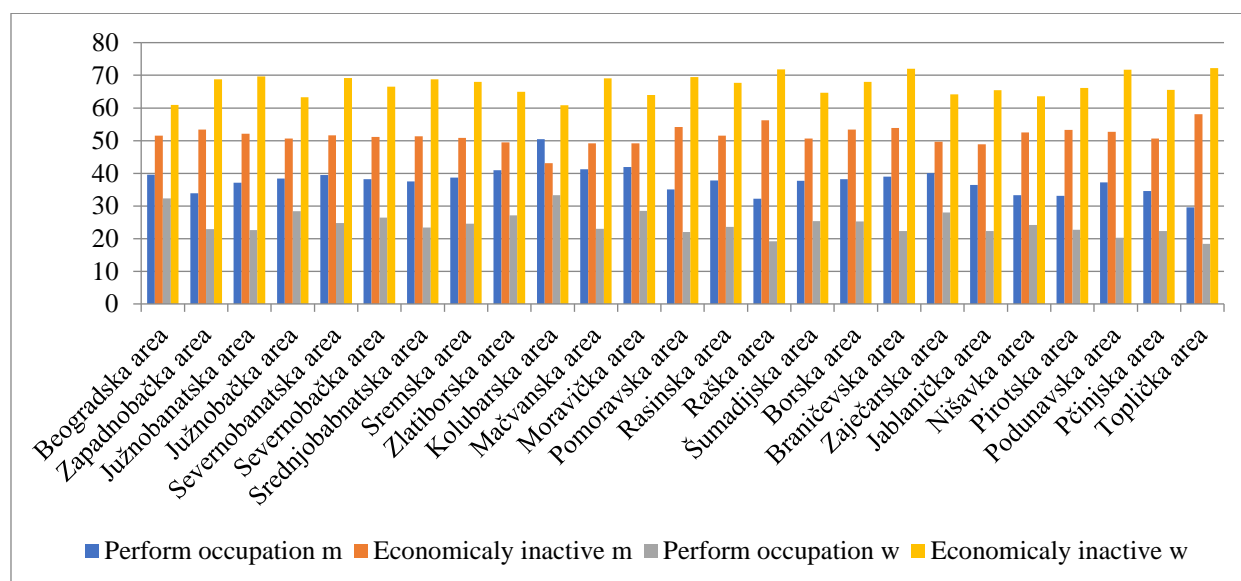


Figure 3. The economic structure of the population (%), by gender and areas

Homemakers were singled out as the third indicator of the economic structure of the population. It is a given that women continue to perform housework today despite the fact that they are not paid for it because this category has been historically, culturally, and traditionally connected with women. The gap in the percentage of men and women who do unpaid employment is clearly depicted in fig. no. 4. Men's shares range from 1 to 3%, but women's shares range from 9 to 21%. There are five areas with a fifth of women who fall into this category – Južnobačanska, Sremska, Mačvanska, Raška, and Podunavska.

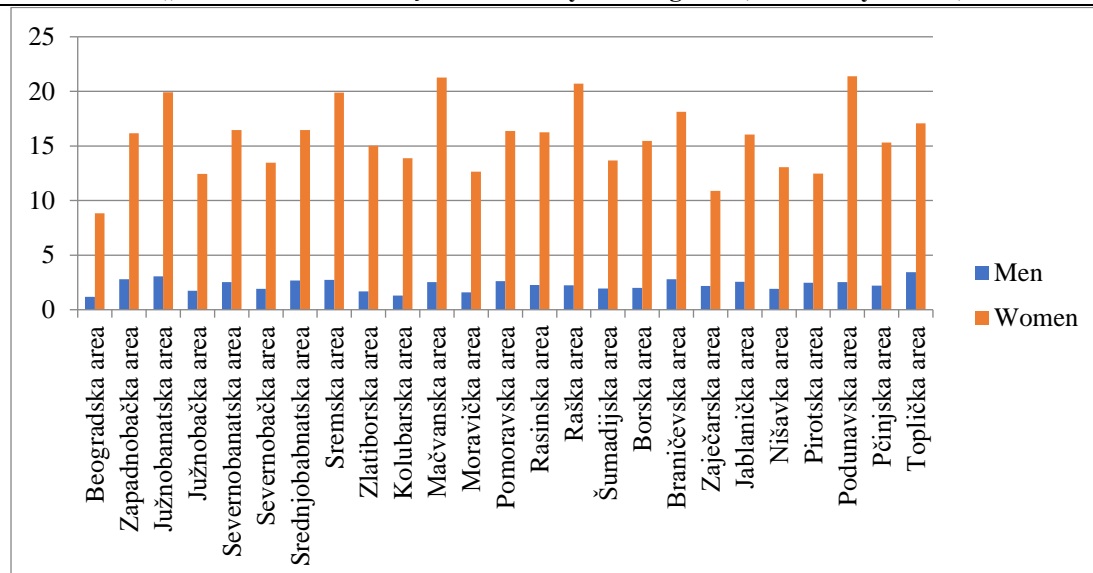


Figure 4. Percentage of homemakers, by gender and areas

4. Discussion

We need to consider the historical context that produced the current statistics data while discussing the educational structure of the population. In Serbia, families in the past had more members than they do now, and this was especially noticeable in rural areas. Due to financial constraints, only one child—usually the oldest and only male—could receive an education. Additionally, it was vital for the remaining kids to assist with domestic and agricultural tasks. The decrease in the number of family members and the rise in the percentage of educated people show how this has evolved over time, but it is a subject for another paper. The consequences of history, economic development, and social planning have led to the fact that today almost all children attend primary school, mandatory by law, and that the share of illiterates has significantly decreased, but also to the fact that a significant share of the older population has not completed primary school. A significant difference can be noted in the results, which are already based on the classification of percentages into groups for men and women. Beogradska area (3% men and 8% women) has a significantly better condition compared to the rest of the country, and Južnobačka area is next to it (6% men and 13% women). For men, the percentages for other areas start from 8 to 18%. For women, only five areas fall into this range (Beogradska, Južnobačka, Severnobačka, Šumadijska, and Nišavska areas). Geographically, the northwest–southeast region can be clearly distinguished by more favorable socio-economic characteristics, as well as by greater economic investments (Babović et al., 2016a). In the other twenty areas, the number of women without completed primary school ranges from 19 to 30%. Borska (29%), Braničevska (30%), and Zaječarska areas (30%) are also geographically grouped, where almost every third woman over the age of fifteen has not completed primary education. The Jablanička and Toplička areas, both with 28%, are immediately behind them. They stand out as one geographic entity as well. Depopulation in this region of Serbia has been a feature for many years, especially in rural areas (Babović et al., 2016b). Rasinska and Pomoravska areas stand out in this region of eastern Serbia, which is the most vulnerable in terms of socio-economic features; there, every fourth woman has not finished primary school. On the other hand, the Kolubarska and Mačvanska areas are grouped, where every fourth woman is also in this category.

When considering gender inequalities, it is important to draw attention to instances where women are more likely than men to have incomplete primary education. In this category, gender

inequalities are greater than 10% in eight out of 25 areas. In Zlatiborska, Rasinska, Pirotska, and Pčinjska areas there are 12% more women than men in this category. In Jablanička area this gap is 13%, in Zaječarska and Toplička areas is 14%, and the highest is in Borska area 15%.

The gender distribution of the illiterate population reveals significant disparities, as well as geographic divisions. Beogradska (0.4%), Moravička (0.4%), and Šumadijska area (0.5%) stand out among the male population as having a half-percent or lower illiteracy rate. In other areas this share is approximately 1%, and it is a little higher in Jablanička and Pčinjska areas (1.4%), with the highest value in Braničevska area (1.7%). On the other hand, in the female part of the population, the share of illiterate women is the lowest in Beogradska, Severnbanatska, and Severnobačka (approximately 1%), and in Zapadnobačka, Južnbanatska, Južnobačka, Srednjobanatska, and Šumadijska areas was approximately 2%. In all other areas the share is above 2%, which means that in the rest 17 areas share is bigger than the share of men. Once more, spatial regularity can be observed here; specifically, northern Serbia has lower percentages of illiterate women, (with Sremska area showing a small difference of 2.6%) and Šumadijska area. The highest share of this category is in even six areas – Mačvanska, Rasinska, and Borska (5%), Pčinjska (6%), Jablanička and Toplička (7%). The areas with the greatest gaps can be identified here as we evaluate the differences between genders because they are similar but not identical to the previous one. In Zlatiborska, Mačvanska, and Rasinska areas the difference is 4%, in Pčinjska is 5% and the highest is in Jablanička and Toplička areas (6%). Although the data on literacy appears disappointing, it can be shown that, especially in places with a higher number of illiterates, their age is 50 and over, when the age structure is examined. Since the data is 12 years old, the population is mainly of retirement age. Given that computer literacy is a skill necessary for the majority of modern employment and that it may be used to get beyond geographic limitations so that qualified persons from poor areas can work online, the 2011 Census data is unsatisfactory in this area. Additionally, computer literacy promotes the inclusion of people and improves general literacy. In Toplička, Jablanička, Braničevska, Kolubarska, and Mačvanska areas, every fourth male resident is computer literate, compared to a third of the population in other areas and a higher percentage only in Južnobačka (44%) and Beogradska areas (50%). For women, the situation is somewhat worse, because in Toplička, Jablanička, Zaječarska, Braničevska, and Mačvanska areas every fifth woman is computer literate. In eight areas every fourth woman is computer literate, and the rest areas have a one-third female literate population, with the exception of Južnobačka (41%) and Beogradska (46%) areas.

When we look at the economic structure, the gender difference is clearly visible here as well, with 21 out of 25 areas where is more than 10% employed men than women. In five areas that difference is 15% or more – Severnbanatska (15%), Kolubarska, Braničevska, and Podunavska (17%), and in Mačvanska is the highest (18%). In Raška, Podunavska, and Toplička areas 20% or less women perform occupation.

Some possible reasons for less employment of women are:

- The lack of childcare centers, particularly in rural areas, restricts women's involvement in the labor market;
- Traditional beliefs about the division of work in the household and division of work in general by gender;
- The absence of jobs for women who are not qualified, the impossibility of requalification and the lack of coordination between the creation of jobs in a certain field, and the education of staff in that field;
- Absence of partial working time for women (and men) who have to take care of small children, or have other justified reasons.

Each area has at least 30% of employed men, but just two have more than 30% of employed women. However, the share of female homemakers in Toplička area (17%) is nearly equal to that of employed, and it is even higher in the Raška and Podunavska areas (21%). Male homemakers make up 2–3% of the population in the same areas. Additionally, female homemakers make up fifth of the

population in Mačvanska, Sremska, and Južnobanatska, which is a percentage that is 2–5% greater than that of employed women.

5. Conclusion

Every society that works to promote economic growth, social inclusiveness, and environmental awareness has plans to achieve the SDGs by 2030, if not exactly reach them. What should a society be built on, one wonders, in order to reach the objectives established for the upcoming seven years? Based on the aforementioned studies, it is clear that work needs to be done to strengthen the weak development foundations in some regions of the country. It is possible to identify the older working-age population that lacks the prerequisites for employment and social inclusion, and this issue requires an intentional solution. There are also geographical areas where women are a more vulnerable group, where a sizeable portion of the population works unpaid jobs, is unemployed, and represents a population that is dependent and far from achieving well-being.

It is important to identify certain targets that cannot be monitored and those where alternate methods of assessment must be used or monitoring has to start. When it comes to SDG4 and target 4.3. which envisages the achievement of equal availability of affordable and quality professional education at all levels, for all women and men, an inconsistent trend is noted, as for the 15–25 group, moderate progress is visible, while for the 25–64 group, a moderate departure from the goal is recorded. It can be concluded that the conditions for equal conditions for education by gender exist and that this applies to all levels of education. Discrimination existed before and now there is no solution to correct the backlog for a large number of women. There are differences between employment and doing unpaid work, and further research should be done on this. One of the major issues that has to be addressed is the fact that while it makes sense to focus on solving issues in the poorest nations, there are also regions in medium-developed nations that are extremely vulnerable and underdeveloped. These regions are rarely addressed when it comes to aids and similar kind of helps.

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